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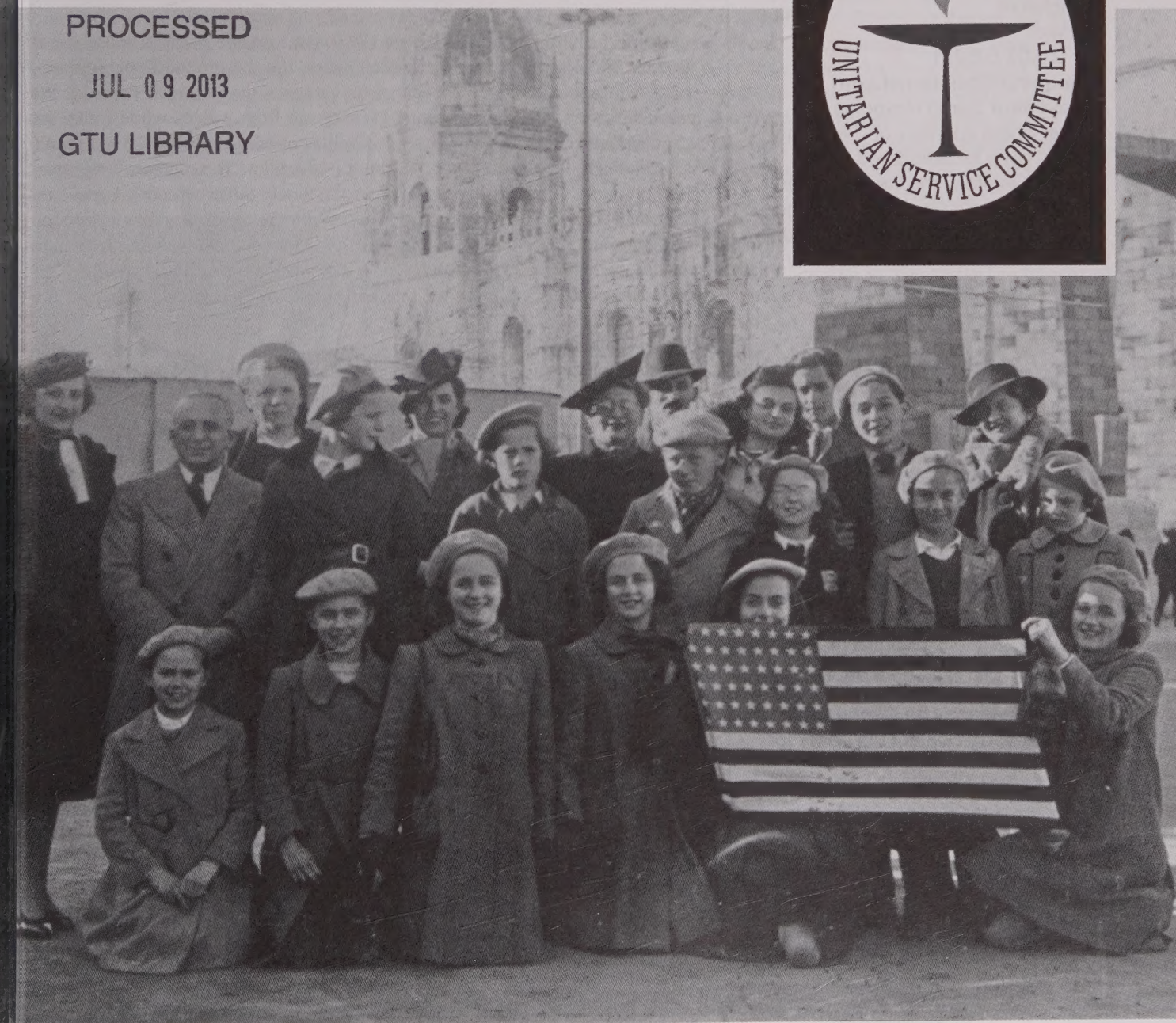
The voice of British and Irish Unitarians and Free Christians Issue 7822 6 July 2013

Righteous Unitarians lived their values, saved lives and gave us our chalice

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Waitstill and Martha Sharp helped save the lives of Jewish children by sending them to the US.
Martha bought each of them a beige beret.

The INQUIRER

THE UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN PAPER

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"To promote a free and inquiring religion through the worship of God and the celebration of life; the service of humanity and respect for all creation; and the upholding of the liberal Christian tradition."

*From the Object passed at the
General Assembly of the Unitarian and
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Editor M Colleen Burns MA

46A Newmarket Road

Cringleford

Norwich NR4 6UF

ph: 01603 505281

e: inquirer@btinternet.com

Copyeditor Sarah Reynolds

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Write to James Barry

24 Lodge Lane

Keymer, Hassocks

West Sussex, BN6 8NA

ph: 01273 844940

e: inquirersubs@gmail.com

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Find out more about Unitarians

www.unitarian.org.uk

or email info@unitarian.org.uk

The General Assembly, Essex Hall

1-6 Essex Street

London WC2R 3HY

ph: 0207 2402384

Inquiring Words The road to Prinsengracht

A month ago I stood in a tiny bedroom at the top of a house in Amsterdam. Yellowed post cards of the young Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret and newspaper cuttings with stories of Hollywood stars are stuck to the wall. There's a post card of the chimpanzees' tea party from the London Zoo, just the sorts of things a young girl sellotapes over her bed. But this is not the room of an ordinary girl. It is the place where Anne Frank lived in hiding and wrote in her little red- and white-checked diary. It was her home and, in a way, her cell. She and her family and the acquaintances who joined them were trapped in that small, steep space behind the bookcase that camouflaged their annex; forced to hide from the blind hatred which would kill them for their beliefs.

It was my second visit to the house on Prinsengracht, the second time I climbed the steep, creaking stairs, the second time I stared out the window at the chestnut tree whose very existence comforted Anne.

My first visit to the annex was in January 1993. I was travelling from Mogadishu to New York after reporting on the famine in Somalia. My flight landed in Amsterdam before dawn. I needed some air. I was fighting amoebic dysentery and struggling with what I had witnessed in the streets of Mogadishu, the harsh calculus at the gates of feeding centres and hospital doorways. Life and death left to the decisions of strangers, the size of your weapon.

My most vivid memory from that 1993 visit to Anne Frank's house is not the little room at the top of the hidden stairs. It's the ground floor museum, filled with photographs of concentration camps – the withered limbs of the naked survivors, their deadened eyes staring out from gallery-white walls, the countless sunken cheeks and distended bellies of hunger. It was all too familiar, too much like what I had left behind in Somalia. The mothers I met who had nothing to offer their dying children, the lonely father who dug a grave on Christmas Eve for the second of his sons to die that week could have been in those museum pictures. It all felt the same. The famine in Somalia was a human construct – nature's fury exacerbated by a power struggle. Warlords who controlled the fertile regions cut off the food supply. More than a quarter-million people died.

The dehumanisation of Somalis allowed the dying to continue – just as the Nazis dehumanised Jews, homosexuals, disabled people. Despite the hopes of the little museum on Prinsengracht, there is no such thing as 'Never Again'.

The hatred, the refusal to see victims as human beings, worthy of dignity and care began with words, began with irresponsible leaders who bought into the easy and cowardly politics of 'us' and 'them'. The wilful misinterpretation of belief – repeated as if to make it truth – justified the ghettos, the trains, the work camps, the gas chambers, the ovens. It started with words. It started with taking the tenets and history of a rich faith and twisting them into something else.

I write as the police begin an investigation into the bomb placed beside a mosque in Walsall. Racist graffiti just appeared inside a mosque in Redditch. As of June, 632 anti-Muslim acts in Britain have been reported since March 2012, according to MAMA, 'Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks'. Each of those acts of hatred started with words, and with silence. Every time a politician or other leader implies there is a difference between Muslim values and Christian ones, the hate is justified. Every time individuals stay silent when prejudices are repeated, the hate grows. And if you are part of the group being marginalised, every act of vandalism, every attack, every ignorant rant is a new blow to a still-tender bruise.

As people who don't proselytise, as people who are not wed to dogma, as people of compassion, Unitarians can help. Confront the ignorance. Remind leaders that none of us should be judged by the worst acts committed by other members of one's faith. Reach out.

It is a shorter road than any of us may think to that small attic room on Prinsengracht.

– MC Burns

Flaming chalice and a Jewish child

By Andrew M Hill

She had jet black hair, dark eyes and sallow skin and, at the time, must have been 15 or 16 years old. The year was 1945 or 1946 when I was but 3 or 4 years old; and my memory is that she was wearing a grey dress with red trimmings and was helping make a bed. Her name was Renée and she was a German-speaking Czech-Jewish refugee child returning briefly to the south Staffordshire Unitarian parsonage which was my home and which, for a while, was her home too.

In the dark days of 1938, and in the forlorn hope that it might minimise the prospects of war between them, the British and German governments signed the Munich agreement ceding the German speaking Sudetenland part of Czechoslovakia to Germany. The immediate effect was a huge migration of people and families seeking refuge in the remaining Czech parts of the country. Among the refugees were intellectuals, social democrats and Jewish men, women and children. It was widely recognised, however, that their safety was only temporary and that, before long, Hitler would be instructing his forces to overrun considerably more of Europe.

It was a race against time. Many organisations Jewish, intellectual, social democrat and Quaker all sent representatives to Prague to establish from scratch a huge refugee rescue mission; and among these representatives were two of our co-religionists from North America, representing the newly established American Unitarian Service Committee: a minister and his wife from Massachusetts by names Waitstill and Martha Sharp.



Clement Brown, wearing his beige cap, purchased by Martha Sharp for each of the children to wear as they travelled. Brown still has that hat from 1940. Photos courtesy of 'Two who Dared'

The Sharps set up their headquarters in a Prague hotel. There were many problems for them to overcome; but by far the largest was the extraordinary bureaucracy of free-world nations requiring guarantors, visas and travel documents for passages to the Americas and elsewhere. Another problem was the uselessness of the local currency beyond the rump of Czechoslovakia. The Sharps became skilled in the creative arts of underground money exchange, consular negotiation and border crossing.

Once the German army entered Prague the Sharps' activities there became severely limited. So they removed their European base to the free port of Lisbon in Portugal and to the port of Marseille within the area then known as Vichy France. Waitstill busied himself establishing refugee escape routes through Spain; and Martha with feeding programmes for the children in the Vichy France internment camps.



The Rev Waitstill and Martha Sharp took their Prague assignment after many had turned it down.

It has taken many years for the story of these two brave American Unitarians to come fully into the light. But, in the summer of 2006, Martha's and Waitstill's names were added to Jerusalem's *Righteous Among the Nations* commemorative wall memorialising gentiles. More recently, 2010, the University of Nebraska Press published this book called *Rescue & Flight: American relief workers who defied the Nazis*. It is written by the grand-daughter of one of the rescued. And just last year Martha Sharp's grandson produced a two-hour documentary film about his grandparents' wartime activities. (See a story on the film on page 5.)

The Sharps were replaced in Europe by another American Unitarian minister, Dr Charles Joy. Dr Joy continued the refugee rescue work pioneered by the Sharps but he also set up refugee feeding and health-care centres, including a well-equipped dispensary at Marseille. Recognising the Service Committee's need for an easily recognised identity, early in 1941 Dr Joy asked an Austrian Jewish refugee artist called Hans Deutsch to work on a design for the organisation. The design which Deutsch handed him pleased Joy:

"It is simple, chaste and distinctive" wrote Dr. Joy. "The holy oil in it is a symbol of helpfulness and sacrifice". "The fact, however, that it remotely suggests a cross was not in his mind, but to me this also has its merit ... Indeed at the present moment, our work is nine-tenths for the Jews, yet we do stem from the Christian tradition, and the cross does symbolize Christianity and its central theme of sacrificial love."

And that is the origin story of the Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist flaming chalice symbol, now lit all around the world wherever and whenever our free-faith communities gather.

Rosalind Lee and John McLachlan

But I must return to Prague in late 1938 because, before Waitstill and Martha Sharp reached the central European city, two British Unitarian ministers were already there and had already set up an office. These ministers were the Rev Rosalind Lee and the Rev John McLachlan. Many of us remember John, who died as recently as 2007; but I doubt that anyone now living remembers Rosalind Lee who died in 1959 – although her memory remains strong within the Unitarian Women's League.

(Continued on next page)

Some who spoke up for children



Nicholas Winton with a child he helped save in Prague.

(Continued from previous page)

Someone who does remember Rosalind Lee, however, was also in Prague in 1938 and he is Nicholas Winton. For 50 years Nicholas Winton told no one about what he was doing there – until his wife found an old scrap book in the loft space of their home. Mrs Winton's discovery led to her husband's appearance on Esther Rantzen's TV show *That's Life* and to the revelation that his 'big secret' was that he had organised a *kinder transport* rescue from Prague of 669 Jewish children. Some have dubbed him the *British Schindler*. He's still living, now 103. He was rewarded with a knighthood and has a seated statue on the platform of Maidenhead railway station; and early in May this year was featured on BBC TV's early evening *One Show*. Sculptured groups of Jewish children at London's Liverpool Street and Prague's Central stations also commemorate his efforts.

Most of the children who were on the Prague *kinder transport* train have either been traced or identified from the lists pasted into that re-discovered scrapbook. But recently I stumbled online upon a list of the children who have not actually been found or identified and among them are the names of Eduard, Erwin and Katerina Kestenbaum and their sister, Renée, the girl with jet black hair, dark eyes and sallown skin who I remember from that day in 1945 or 1946 wearing a grey dress with red trimmings and helping to make a bed. So I wrote to 'Winton's List' and received back this message:

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your email and the information you give about 4 of the children, who we have not had any information about till now. It is also interesting to know that your family knew Rev. R[osalind] Lee as my father talked of her and the help she gave to his attempts to get foster homes and guarantors for the children. If you should ever discover more about what happened to these four, I would be most interested to hear about it. I am attempting to keep up to date lists of discovered children – though it's not easy to keep track.

Many thanks again for the information,

Best wishes,

Barbara Winton, Daughter of Sir Nicholas

Stockbroker Nicholas Winton had gone to Prague in 1938 for a skiing holiday which never happened. Instead, a Unitarian minister, called Rosalind Lee, took him on a tour of the camps where Jewish refugee children were gathered; and then she provided him with the necessary funds to set on course a campaign endeavouring to persuade reluctant free nations to admit these unfortunate children.

Renée, her sister and her brothers, I now know were passengers on the 1938 *kinder transport* from Prague. 'Winton's List' shows that they and some other children were all sponsored by Miss Lee and by members of the Lee family and were living with British Unitarian families. Renée came to live with us for a while at least until my birth in 1942; and I also now know, from the digitalised on-line files of the Unitarian Service Committee at Harvard that in 1945 Renée and Katarina were living in south Wales with Miss Lee herself. Their parents perished and I don't know what happened to the two brothers but early in 1948 Renée and her sister Katerina finally got their visas to join their aunt in New York. Katerina changed her name.



Sir Nicholas Winton visiting Prague in 2007. Photo by Li-sung, via Wikimedia Commons

About Renée, I know no more but I often think and wonder about her and when I do it is these words of the German Confessing Church pastor, Martin Niemöller, which come to mind:

First they came for the communists,
and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a communist.
Then they came for the socialists,
and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists,
and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a trade unionist.
Then they came for me,
and there was no one left to speak for me.

because for Renée there nearly wasn't anyone to speak; and I think of Renée's brother Jew who is recorded as saying:

Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these
who are members of my family, you did it to me.
[Matthew 25:40]

because for Renée and 668 other children there was someone who spoke.

The Rev Andrew M Hill is a retired Unitarian minister.



Three young Jewish girls helped by Waitstill and Martha Sharp, wearing the beige berets that Martha bought them. Photo courtesy of 'Two Who Dared'. www.twowhodared.com

New film tells story of 'Two Who Dared'

By Michelle Bates Deakin

In February 1939, Martha and the Rev Waitstill Sharp embarked on a daring journey to aid refugees and dissidents in Prague as the Nazis began to close in on Czechoslovakia. They left behind two children and the congregation at the Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts, Unitarian Church.

During World War II, the Sharps saved the lives of hundreds of political dissidents, Jews, and children as their work took them across Europe. Despite their heroics, their story was somewhat obscure.

The Sharps' grandson, Artemis Joukowsky III, spent years piecing their story back together. His efforts led to his grandparents being named "Righteous Among the Nations" by Yad Vashem – two of only three Americans to receive that honour. And Joukowsky has directed and co-produced a documentary film, *Two Who Dared: The Sharps' War*.

"I feel very gratified as a Unitarian that this story is going to be told," said Joukowsky, a member of the UU Area Church at First Parish in Sherborn, Massachusetts. He hopes the story of the Sharps' legendary actions will inspire people to action. He envisions the movie helping to build communities of people who dare. "How do we have a pledge that we will take risks for others?" he asks. "Let's use the film to take more risks to help people who are in danger."

The story of the Sharps' heroism began in January 1939, when they received a call from the Rev Everett Baker, vice president of the American Unitarian Association, asking if they would travel to Czechoslovakia to help provide relief to people trying to escape Nazi persecution. Seventeen people had already turned Baker down, but the Sharps said 'yes'. The next month, they arrived in Prague, site of the world's largest Unitarian church, which was also a central spoke in the city's Nazi resistance. The Sharps helped arrange exit visas and humanitarian aid as the Nazis invaded the city.

During the course of World War II, the Sharps travelled

back and forth to Europe to continue their humanitarian work. They spent most of 1940 in France, helping intellectuals and Jews flee the country and aiding refugees. Martha arranged for 13 tons of powdered milk to be delivered to malnourished refugee children in France. And the couple staged a dangerous rescue of Lion Feuchtwanger, a prominent German novelist who was on the Nazis' most-wanted list, and smuggled him into the United States.

Martha also orchestrated passage for 29 children to flee Europe on a boat bound for the United States. The film includes interviews with some of those children, now elderly. Clement Brown recalled how Martha had purchased beige berets for each of the children to wear as they travelled. Brown still has that hat from 1940. In *Two Who Dared*, he put on that tiny beret from his boyhood. "Only a special person would have left their own children and rescued other children," said Brown.

Several historians interviewed in the film did not know the Sharps' story before Joukowsky began the project. "To have them now saying it is true and telling the story is remarkable for me," said Joukowsky. "There was so much validation of the story."

It was validating for his family as well, Joukowsky said. His mother was one of the Sharps' two children left behind in Wellesley as his grandparents completed their humanitarian work. His family has struggled to reconcile the abandonment with the heroism. Sifting through his grandparents' letters and archives, Joukowsky learned that his grandparents struggled with the decision, too. His research has painted a clearer picture for his mother and his uncle of their parents during the war and after their return to the United States, when Martha and Waitstill ultimately divorced.

This article originally appeared in UU World and is reprinted with permission. See www.uuworld.org. For more information on the film, see www.twowhodared.com

Climate Change – *Did we*

By Vic Mason,
Colin Partington and
Richard Varley

A year ago the scene was set for an interesting debate when a Foy member suggested “Climate Change” as the topic for this year’s Annual Foy Conference. In view of the controversial nature of this subject, two members of the society, Colin Partington (a physicist, retired from Ionising Radiation Protection) and Vic Mason (a retired agricultural research scientist) were asked to present the more alarmist and the more sceptical attitudes, respectively, before opening the debate to general transparent discussion under the chairmanship of Foy’s President, Richard Varley.

Adverts were sent out prior to the conference and several new members expressed an interest, some of whom attended the event at the Nightingale Centre at Great Hucklow. The adverts stirred up strong feelings amongst some Foy members who considered that the public debate was already over and a consensus reached. We should now concentrate on implementing political decisions without re-visiting stale arguments. These members helped the study leaders by pointing to numerous web-sites and reports that supported their viewpoint. Nevertheless, links to other reports, books and web-sites, taking a different stance, are also available. Consequently, with a great deal of information available to both sides of the debate, an interesting conference was in the offing.

How to distil evidence and viewpoints?

How did we distil this information into bite-sized chunks, and what did we glean from this enjoyable event?

Well, most scientific institutions, including the prestigious Royal Society, have already made public statements on the issue. Many agree with the hypothesis that climate is being seriously affected by human activity, while others are less certain or strongly disagree. Many eminent climate scientists from around the world have expressed their opinion of the “consensus” view, pointing out that the word “consensus” is itself a political/religious concept with little scientific significance. If science was governed by consensus we might still believe the Earth to be flat, and if authorities determined the veracity of science we might still believe that our planet was the centre of the universe!

How has climate changed over centuries?

The conference started with a short talk describing how climate has changed over geological time, with Earth going through warm and cold cycles. Much of recent human advancement and settlement of our globe occurred during the warmer periods of the last 2500 years. The Roman Warm Period (from 500BCE to 500AD) was one of relative plenty and prosperity when the Roman and Carthaginian empires flourished.

This was followed by the cooler Dark Ages (from 550 AD to about 900 AD), during which severe climate conditions were often experienced. At times, trees almost stopped growing, crops failed, the Black Sea and Nile occasionally froze, and human populations fell dramatically across Europe and beyond.

Then the climate warmed up again in the Medieval Warm Period (from 900AD to 1300 AD), when relatively rich harvests and more benign conditions produced greater prosperity, the growth of human populations, and even voyages of discovery.

Grapes grew in the north of England

At this time the Viking adventurers established settlements in Iceland, Greenland and even North America. Archaeological and



NASA photo. The brightest areas of the Earth are the most urbanised (China and India.) Cities tend to grow along coastlines and transportation routes, connecting the brighter dots of city centers. In Russia, the Trans-Siberian Railway connects Moscow to Vladivostok. Even without the underlying map, the outlines of many of the electric light, some regions remain thinly populated and unlit.

historical evidence suggests that in South West Greenland they fished and hunted in relatively ice-free seas, kept farm animals, and even grew barley where now there is permafrost. The UK population grew from 1.5 to 5 million and grapes were grown in the north of England! This period was followed by the Little Ice Age (from 1280 to 1850) when winter Frost Fairs were held on the frozen Thames and the Vikings abandoned their Greenland settlements. This was a serious time for humans, particularly in the northern regions. Currently we are in a warmer climate - and thriving: but for how long?

We saw Al Gore’s film *An Inconvenient Truth*, in which the former US Presidential candidate claimed that Climate Science is well understood, that emissions of CO₂ from the burning of fossil fuels is causing Anthropogenic (man-made) Global Warming, and that a catastrophic future awaits us if we don’t seriously mend our careless ways. He displayed the disputed ‘Hockey Stick’ graph, which suggests global temperatures slowly falling over the past 1000 years prior to a rapid rise in the 20th century – linked directly to CO₂ emissions. His was a powerful message, which won the film two Oscars, and earned Al Gore the Nobel Peace Prize. Controversially, it was also relayed to every secondary pupil in the UK.

Balanced view expressed

The authors of the most recent Royal Society statement have addressed their comments to issues on which there is little debate, issues on which there is a wide “consensus” amongst climate-related scientists, and controversial issues about which there is considerable uncertainty. Their officials expressed a more balanced recent view where they suggested wide agreement that:

- The world has warmed by about 0.8°C since the mid-19th century.
- This rise occurred in two periods - from 1910 to 1940 and from 1970 to 2000.
- Each decade since the 1970s has been warmer than the previous one.

Do it? Are we doomed?



necessarily the most populated. (Compare western Europe with the United States interstate highway system appears as a lattice is a thin line stretching from Moscow through the center of Asia to could still be visible. Even more than 100 years after the invention

- Global average CO₂ has increased from around 280 ppm in 1850s to 390 ppm at present.
- According to this source, man's activities contribute to the warming of the planet.

The Royal Society then lists climatic features for which it claimed a 'consensus' but no overall agreement:

- It may take a long time for man's atmospheric CO₂ emissions to reach a new equilibrium.
- There are many less well-understood causes of climate change – some natural and some man-made.
- Water vapour is likely to have a major effect on climate, but by how much is unclear. Different computer models do not agree.
- The observed warming of the Earth cannot be explained solely by natural causes, unless the computer modelling is grossly wrong.

No good explanation available

Overall, the Royal Society officials claim that global warming is largely man-made, though computer models fail to properly explain it.

Lastly, the Royal Society discussed several issues for which there is considerable uncertainty. These include the effect of atmospheric particles and aerosols on cloud formation and the albedo effect, the influence of warming on polar ice sheets, possible changes to the Gulf Stream, and, importantly, how carbon is exchanged within and between the surface layers of land-masses, the atmosphere and the oceans (i.e. the Carbon Cycle).

The next two sessions examined the natural and anthropogenic causes of climate change in the past and at the present time. These factors included variations in solar magnetic activity (sun spots, etc.), the changing tilt of the Earth, the cyclical, slightly elliptical course of Earth's changing orbit around the sun, the rather unpredictable transfer of electro-magnetic waves and movement of greenhouse gases across and within the atmosphere, CO₂ emissions

in volcanic and seismic activity, and movements of sea currents. These features operate continuously or over cycles lasting from a few months to hundreds of thousands of years.

In this context, many climate scientists do not accept the current view of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and challenge the official position in published technical papers and books. They claim that many current *global* events can be largely explained by natural causes, although they also concede that human activity can have a big impact on *local* climate. They point to the fact that global average temperatures have not increased over the past 15 years, despite an approximately 5% increase in atmospheric CO₂ levels over this period. They also refer to the fall in temperature between 1940 and 1970: a time of rapidly rising CO₂ concentrations. They suggest that atmospheric concentrations of CO₂ (an essential plant food) have been several-fold higher in the past, increases in temperature *preceding* increases in CO₂ levels. In their view, such observations indicate that many determinative computer models are flawed. Consequently, suggested solutions to assumed man-made Global Warming are premature and may be wrong!

No temperature rise for five years

The Met Office agrees that global temperatures have not increased for 15 years and predicts that they will not rise for a further five years. Nevertheless, their models suggest that human activity is the only explanation of the 20th Century temperature rise, and that after 2018 global temperatures will rise again. We must wait and see. By implication, the Met Office appears to be saying that we need to be doing something serious about man-made CO₂ levels. (This is despite similar or higher peaks being recorded earlier in Western Europe).

Contrary to such projections, some scientists believe that it's more likely that Earth is heading towards cooler times over the next few decades, a few even suggesting that we may be approaching the start of the next Ice Age. If the latter is the case the effect would be far more catastrophic than Global Warming, and our environment could benefit from increased emissions of CO₂!

Fortunately, only prophets, seers, and gamblers dare to predict the future with certainty! The Met Office no longer provides long-term weather forecasts! One thing is certain: the climate will never stay the same. It will continue to change naturally, whatever human beings do to it.

Still no easy answers

It was clear to those attending the conference that it is a highly complex subject which does not lend itself to simplistic explanations and solutions. There was concern that some of the research findings might be influenced by political and financial sponsorship issues and that it was important that research findings should be unfettered by such outside influences.

It is hard to believe that increasing development and industrialisation is not having some impact on our climate. What is more difficult for the lay person to determine is *exactly* how great that effect is. There was agreement that we must respect and care for our planet by ensuring our activities have a minimal impact. We have a responsibility to use finite resources responsibly and seek effective renewable sources of energy supply which do not impose a financial burden on poorer members of society. It is Foy's plan to raise awareness of the subject in the Unitarian press and at the next General Assembly meetings.

Vic Mason, Colin Partington and Richard Varley were presenters at this year's recent Foy Society conference.

What colour should Unitarian socks be?

Could you spot a Unitarian if you saw one walking down the street? A delightful art exhibition in our local Friends Meeting House prompted this curious thought, initially about Quakers, then by association, Unitarians. A hand-moulded ceramic exhibit depicted a small group of worshippers, seated on simple wooden benches in silent Quaker contemplation. Fluttering above them was a paper mobile of one hundred white doves, one for each year of the Northern Peace Board, currently celebrating its centenary. The doves, like thoughts of peace, seemed to be flying across the room, out of the window into the world. I put a complimentary comment in the visitors' book and then chatted to the artist, along with another woman, both members of the Meeting House.

"I notice you've depicted the Quakers in traditional dress," I said. "Plain clothing, men in large-brimmed hats, women in cotton bonnets..."

"Yes," she said. "That's how they looked a hundred years ago."

"Is there a typical Quaker dress style today?" I asked.

The other woman responded eagerly. "Oh, yes! I often look at someone walking down the street and I say to myself, 'I bet she's a Quaker.'"

"What makes you think that?" I asked.

"Oh, plain clothes, warm and comfortable, probably purchased in a charity shop. And pink socks," she added.

"Pink socks? Really?"

"Well, yes," she explained. "I once joined a Quaker meditation group and discovered that the same people were also in a knitting circle. They all wore knitted socks, and discussed at length how to turn a heel properly. And most of their socks were pink."

I smiled, not entirely convinced, but I do now find myself looking at the socks worn by passers-by, especially in our many charity shops. And I find myself wondering what colour socks Unitarians wear and why. How are the best dressed Unitarians of today attired?

* * *

"I hope you won't be modest about giving your book a plug in your *Inquirer* column!" said a colleague. I squirmed a little, modesty being only one of my many good qualities. But this particular colleague had helped me enormously with preparing the manuscript and getting it into print. I feel somewhat obliged to take his advice, so here goes. I have been pleased with the kindly reviews (see www.nufonline.org.uk/NewNUF09/bookreviews.php). Also, the June issue of *The Unitarian* to a collection of fifty-two short sermons, a year's worth, covering the seasons and the main Christian festivals, that I have recently published under the title *Wednesday at the Oasis*. They are from my Cross Street Chapel, Manchester ministry and the book is selling well.

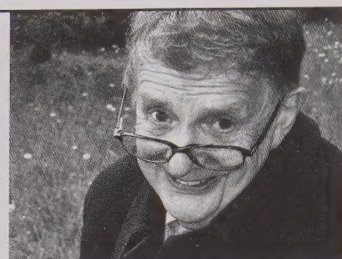
I am happy to post a copy to anyone interested, £8.99 plus p&p, payable to John Midgley. Or £9 for a signed copy, being immodest enough to think my signature is worth a penny! I'm sorry if the post and packaging charge, at £2.50 seems a lot, but postal charges have increased in recent times. I hope this puts no-one off. (*Editor's note: a review is forthcoming in The Inquirer*)

* * *

I am among the many who view with dismay the proposed selling off of the Royal Mail. There is widespread affection

Funny Old World

By
John Midgley



for the friendly local post office, in country villages, towns and city suburbs too. These mines of endless information are *ours*, and there is still a sense of loyal public service, with the arrival at the door of 'Postman Pat', sometimes at the end of an all-weather journey. They represent a core of caring and social cohesion that it would be tragic to see disappear (like the red telephone kiosks), in the cause of profiteering, along with the many beautiful red, sometimes green post-boxes, as well as postage stamps (see British Postal Museum and Archive).

Who remembers *Consignia*? Ugh! When post offices also became the Welfare State agency for collecting pensions, social security payments and such like, they became like a secular local church, going there being the only bit of caring, human contact many folk enjoy. A good natter in the Post Office queue can bring uplift to an otherwise lonely week. Rowland Hill (1795–1879) who devised the uniform flat rate charge system was a Kidderminster Unitarian.

* * *

My attention was drawn to all this by *Don't Shoot the Messenger: Adventures in the Post*, the latest play by the Mikron Theatre Company. This amazingly multi-talented acting and singing group travels the country putting on plays in village halls and the back rooms of pubs, or even on board the canal narrow-boat where most of them live. Written by the members and including original songs, they touch on social, environmental and historical issues, with a dash of humour. Actors take several parts each and change costumes and sets while you watch.

I thoroughly enjoyed last year's anniversary play about the Luddites, making me vow to never again use that word as an insult. Also, *Losing the Plot* was about preserving allotments. Their recent offering, *Beyond the Veil*, is about bees and bee-keeping and their crucial importance to our environment, encouraging us to find ways to attract bees to our gardens. Audiences are provided with the words of the songs, and I felt sure that one of them would be to a well-known Beatles number. Actually it was to a new tune, but try singing this to *Let it Be*:

In the spring (or early summer)
there's a chance that you will see
Sleepy little bumble
Let her bee
Creeping out of hibernation; she won't trouble you and me
Warming in the sunshine
Let her bee

The theatre's website is www.mikron.org.uk. If their travels bring them near you, don't miss an evening with them. I only wish they would produce a campaigning play on Unitarianism. It would be interesting to see what costumes they wore, especially their socks.

The Rev John Midgley is a retired Unitarian minister.

All of us can make Unitarians visible

As many of you will know, I am the convenor of the Visibility Strategy Group which has as its mission, increasing the national visibility of Unitarianism. Which, of course, is dead simple. We craft a couple of little TV adverts on the lines of the old newspaper advertisement – “Are you a Unitarian without knowing it” and put them on the telly after ‘Downton Abbey’ and ‘Unreported World’. No problem.

Except that the hundreds who rush into their local Unitarian church/chapel/meeting house would find – what?

Piles of old curtains, tattered hymn books, vases full of dusty artificial flowers. Nice people, nice building, nice service, nice coffee, nice biscuits. A half-hour lecture over coffee about how superior Unitarians are to other faith groups.

Why should they come back? They wouldn’t, would they? Their life is moving along fine without spending an hour every Sunday with the nice Unitarians – lovely coffee, pity about the hymn books. Especially as they have no tradition of going to church, singing hymns, praying.

And yet, and yet. We know, because so many people have told us, that many rejoiced when they found Unitarianism, how they wished they had found it earlier.

So the VSG has a problem. We have to create some way of making Unitarianism more visible to the people who need to see it. And part of the problem is that we do not have a national product. Every congregation is autonomous and individual. It is not possible for anyone to promise anything about every Unitarian congregation.

Unitarians are committed to Social Action, I say: and Mrs A goes to Upper Pocklington and finds that social action is the flower festival-cum-white elephant stall. Unitarians are forward-looking and free thinking, I say: and Mr B and Mr C go to Upper Pocklington and ask to hold their wedding there – they are both turned to stone. Unitarians are warm and welcoming, I say: and Ms D and her young baby go to Upper Pocklington and are asked to leave because the baby cries.

So I am afraid it is up to you.

Almost every edition of our Unitarian periodicals contains news about what some congregation or other is doing. And what do many congregations do? Nothing. Good ideas drain away and disappear like summer rain in the desert because so many congregations won’t do anything. They don’t say: That looks interesting. Should we try that? After the nice service they drink their nice coffee and talk about the closure of the post office in Deacon Street.

Can you imagine the impact we could create if 200 Unitarian places of worship offered the same service on the same day?

On 16 June a Flower Communion service in honour of Rev Dr Norbert Capek.

On 14 July a service on Liberty, Equality, Brother/Sisterhood to celebrate Bastille Day.

On 29 September in honour of Gertrud von Petzold, the first woman minister in England (her induction was on 29 September 1904) to celebrate inclusivity in worship and ministry. *

Can you imagine the impact we could create if we had three FUSE (Festival of Unitarians in the South East) events instead of one?

If we want Unitarianism to be a national organisation in



five years’ time then we have to do something now. And the first thing, as I keep on saying, is hold a congregational meeting. Talk to each other about two things. One is the spiritual life of your congregation, the other is your place in the local community. Neither of these need involve hours of work or huge amounts of money. But, if all you have to offer is a weekly hymn sandwich about something nice and a nice cup of coffee and a nice welcome to anyone who manages to find you, then in five years time there will be no Unitarian movement. You will be on your own. And when you all die your church, chapel or meeting house will become a carpet warehouse.

* I wrote this paragraph before Belper had put its motion to the GA. How’s that for synchronicity? The resolution passed overwhelmingly and reads:

This General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches:

- 1) *Affirms the common call of faith traditions for peace among the nations*
- 2) *Acknowledges those congregations which presently participate in inter-faith & inter church events contemplating and praying for World Peace*
- 3) *Designates the 3rd Sunday in October each year as a special Unitarian day for World Peace when Unitarian & Free Christian Churches host an ‘Interfaith Service for World Peace’*
- 4) *Requests that the Facilitation Services Action Group together with the Unitarian Peace Fellowship produce worship material for this occasion.*

I do hope you are going to hold a service as well, perhaps, as your usual interfaith or peace service.

Dorothy Haughton is a worship leader in the Midlands.

Letters to the Editor

Taking an example from two former prisoners

To the Editor:

The news that Nelson Mandela, first black President of South Africa, is in intensive care at the age of 94, has reawakened thoughts of that great human being, who emerged after 27 years of captivity to take on that challenging role. (*At press time, Mandela was still hospitalised – editor.*)

It has also awakened memories of Terry Waite, held captive for 'only' four years, but in arguably worse conditions, by anonymous people with constant fears they would kill him. Without news of him, I thought he had been killed and was amazed when he was released.

Like Nelson Mandela but on a much smaller scale, Terry Waite has used and continues to use his experience to attempt to help other people. He became president of Emmaus, a charity that supports homeless people begun in Paris in 1949 and has supported a number of Emmaus Houses around the UK.

In those houses, residents, known as 'companions' are expected to repair



The Rev Terry Waite

furniture which is later sold in Emmaus Charity Shops. Companions gain self respect by themselves helping others, for example, by participating in soup runs, neighbourhood watch and even assisting at retirement homes. There are 23 Companions in Bristol's Emmaus House and there are some 20 other similar projects throughout the country.

I am a member of PAP, the Unitarian General Assembly's Penal Affairs Panel, which tries to identify ways in which individual Unitarians and congregations may make a difference. Housing even a few homeless people, and providing hope for even a few

people, may have the ripple effect being delicately promoted in Emmaus Houses. It is a cause worthy of consideration.

The Emmaus web site has information and can be found at www.emmaus.org.uk/

Bernard Omar

Frenchay Congregation, Bristol

Stapline is too

much like red tape

To the Editor:

Why are Unitarian reform members so prolix and prosaic? The EC's new slogan (*Inquirer*, 22 June) is committee English at its worst. It is far too long for a proper strapline, being more of a red-tape line really, but a tantalising two syllables short of a haiku. Had they referred the issue to a creative person with a sense of scansion they might have got something like:

Nurturing Faith and
Celebrating Difference –
Taking Life to Heart.

Just the last line of this would have done as a true catchy strapline. Too late now!

Jim Stearn

Brigg, North Lincolnshire

Birth Announcement

Jo, Ann and Elin are delighted to announce the birth of Samuel Joseph James, born on 31st May 2013 at Stoke Mandeville. May God bless and keep you always.

Faith in Words

The annual issue of worship material is coming up in August. Please send in prayers, addresses, meditations, art work, photographs – anything which is an expression of your faith – to *The Inquirer*. The double issue is one of the most popular of the year.

New contributors are most welcome. For more information or to submit material, email: Inquirer@btinternet.com Or, use the editor's postal address on page 2.

Material is due by 13 July

Inquirer letters policy

Letters should be succinct. It is preferable that they are sent by email to inquirer@btinternet.com Typewritten or legible handwritten submissions may be sent to the editor at 46A Newmarket Road, Cringleford, Norwich NR4 6UF

Letters should be signed with the writer's full name and, if applicable, the name of the group or congregation with which the writer is affiliated. A postal address and telephone number are required, for verification purposes. Letters will be edited for length and content and may appear in an excerpted form. Any affiliations listed with letter writers' names are for identification purposes only, and should not suggest the view expressed is representative of that body.

Wendy Adams: loyal Unitarian, good friend

By Peter B Godfrey

With the death of Wendy Adams on the 13 March at the age of 74, British Unitarianism lost one of its most loyal workers and all who were fortunate to have known her lost a good friend. On 29 June, Wendy's ashes were interred in the graveyard at Sevenoaks Unitarian Meeting House, next to her husband Paul Adams.

Wendy was born into a Unitarian family and from an early age was actively involved in the life of our churches. At Golders Green, then under the lively ministry of the Rev Keith Treacher, Wendy met Paul. They married in 1960 and had three sons, Neil, Ralph and Guy. Paul died in 1995 at the early age of 57.

During her lifetime Wendy gave great support in many ways to the congregations of which she was a member – Golders Green, Sevenoaks and, most recently, Hastings. The work that made her most widely known began when Wendy became a secretary at Essex Hall in 1979. Wendy was a valuable member of the staff at Unitarian Headquarters for 22 years. During that time Wendy performed various offices, perhaps most particularly as a member of the Religious Education and Youth Department team – work that began with active support for and co-operation with the late Rev Trevor Jones.

In addition to all her work for the General Assembly Wendy was also Secretary of the London District Provincial Assembly (LDPA) for nearly 20 years. In this office Wendy gave loyal service to the churches in this large District and also gave much appreciated help and support to many individual members. Wendy was a vital help to the District Ministers during her secretaryship and was particularly knowledgeable and helpful during the lengthy interregnum between two of them.

As a lay preacher over many years, Wendy's addresses and



Wendy Adams

children's stories were deeply appreciated, as was the fact that to take services she travelled all over the South East by public transport. This travelling increased when Wendy was appointed the LDPA's Honorary President in 2001 and served until 2004.

Wendy's funeral service at Hastings Crematorium on Monday 8 April was conducted by the Rev David Skelton. David also conducted the Memorial Service later the same day at Tenterden Unitarian Church. A large gathering heard tributes from various people reflecting aspects of Wendy's life and career. Her brother, Dr Robin Mead spoke movingly of Wendy. Mrs Wilna Roberts told of Wendy's friendship and membership

at Bessels Green. One of her District Ministers, the Rev Peter Godfrey, spoke of Wendy's friendly efficiency as LDPA Secretary and the Rev John Harley told of Wendy's work for the Religious Education and Youth department. Mrs Christine Hayhurst spoke amusingly of her part in appointing Wendy to the staff at Essex Hall, of Wendy's invaluable team work and the friendship they developed that continued to the end of Wendy's life. Three members of Hastings Unitarian Church, Beryl Fisher, Mary Burbage, and Mary Jenkins, told of how well Wendy had settled with and served her last congregation in roles such as welcomer to visitors and secretary. All who spoke referred to Wendy's wicked sense of humour, the warmth of her friendship and her deep concern for Unitarian values.

Wendy is survived by her sons Neil, Ralph and Guy all of whom took part in the Memorial Service, and by her daughters-in-law Karen and Imogen and grandsons George and Benjamin.

Peter B Godfrey is a retired Unitarian minister.

SimpleGifts celebrates, needs support

SimpleGifts, the Unitarian Social Outreach project in Bethnal Green, has been in operation for one year, and is going from strength to strength. Its weekly Tuesday after-school café regularly attracts more than 80 children, parents and carers for healthy snacks, crafts, homework help and games. There is also a language class for adults learning English. SimpleGifts is on the threshold of several other programmes, including a meal programme for undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers, a teenage leadership programme in conjunction with the neighbouring school, and a table tennis league, plus other ideas are in the pipeline.

Strong links have been built with other service organisations in Tower Hamlets, particularly with Quaker Social Action. All this has been made possible by the Rev Rob Gregson and Ann Howell as the paid part-time staff (who work many more hours than they are paid for), plus a regular cadre of Unitarian volunteers who include Louise Baumberg, David Bidwell, Paul Cannon, Leighton Cole, Julian Meek, Kerry Reid, Ingrid Tavkar, John Booth, Beryl Brooks, Carol Williams

and Rose Heatley. Also, thanks to Patricia Harden for hosting two American visitors who will be helping with SimpleGifts during the summer.

The Steering Group consists of Paul Cannon, Leighton Cole, Pat Fernandes, David Usher and Patricia Williams, plus the paid staff.

In addition to its work providing direct services to a very impoverished local area, SimpleGifts' other mission is to empower Unitarians throughout the UK in their social action witness. It has held workshops, and given presentations at the Annual Meetings and other District events.

At a recent Vision Development Day, the Steering Group adopted as its vision "Inspired by Unitarian values, SimpleGifts enhances the lives of people in East London, and empowers British Unitarians in the work of social action."

SimpleGifts needs your financial support. Please send your donations to SimpleGifts, 117 Mansford St, London E2 6LX. All donations are doubled by The Bowland Trust.

IARF events in Birmingham and Horsham

By Richard Boeke

The 2014 Congress of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) will be held at the University of Birmingham, on 24-27 August 2014. The theme will be 'Challenges for Religious Freedom in the Digital Age'. Sheikh Muhammed Amin-Evans is chair of the host committee.

As a "warm-up" to August 2014, you are invited to 'Religious Freedom and Responsibility for Planet and People' on 20-23 August 2013 at Horsham, West Sussex (20 minute train ride south of London Gatwick Airport). Hosted by IARF, the World Congress of Faiths, and Horsham Interfaith Forum. For details see www.worldfaiths.org and look under events. Registration by Pay Pal or credit card.

Tuesday, 20 August, the Rev Dr Marcus Braybrooke and Mary Braybrooke will speak on 'The Widening Vision of Interfaith'. Tuesday evening will be Israel night, featuring IARF Vice President, Dr Shlomo Alon, and Dr Yehuda Stolov who has a TED profile on his work in Interfaith Dialogue in Israel. (See: www.ted.com/profiles/2618)

Wednesday, Sheikh M. Amin-Evans will introduce IARF Birmingham, 2014, followed by a Women's Panel chaired by Dr Annelies Trenning, Netherlands. Prize winning author, Dr Dan McKanan, Harvard, will speak on 'Ethics and Magic,' followed by a lunch honouring guests from Japan, IALRW President, Dr Kathy Matsui and Guji Yamamoto, Chief Priest of Tsubaki Grand Shrine. The afternoon will feature Professor Harold French, author of 'Zen and the Art of Everything'. Wednesday night will feature a panel on Religious Freedom in South Asia, and a video from Japan on 'Misogi Waterfall Purification'.

Thursday morning a panel on Planet and People will be followed by a bus trip to Worth Abbey featuring a talk by



British IARF Leaders met in Croydon to plan IARF 2013 and announce IARF Congress 2014. From left, Annette Percy, Jeff Teagle, Charanjit Singh, the Rev Chris Hudson, Pejman Khojasteh, Ajit Singh, Sheikh M Amin-Evans, the Rev Richard Boeke, the Rev Anne McClelland, John Carter, Derek McAuley, the Rev James McClelland. The flowers on the table contain a chain of paper cranes as a symbol of Hiroshima. Photo by James Barry

the Bishop of Arundel and Brighton and a panel from South East England Faith Forum SEEFF. Following Thursday afternoon at Worth Abbey, the closing night presentation is 'Ireland – South and North', with an address on 'Healing the Troubles' by the Rev Chris Hudson MBE, (see <http://youtu.be/GfVUaxM9exQ> the Rev Chris Hudson talks about his work in Belfast)

Students and young adults may apply to be IARF Interns, helping to host IARF Horsham. Application with brief bio to

Richard Boeke, Chair, British IARF, 16 St Mary's Gardens, Horsham RH12 1JP, United Kingdom or email:

r.boeke@virgin.net

Scottish Women's League members gathered

Those attending the Scottish Women's League meeting (28 in all) on 8 June, at our Aberdeen Church, were welcomed by Anita Stephen and treated to a lovely lunch, followed by an entertaining talk from the National Women's League President, Joan McFarlane. Joan is an active member of the branch at our Stalybridge Church. Joan will be visiting many of our Unitarian Churches during her year in office, bring



(l-r) Barbara Clifford (President of Scottish WL), Joan McFarlane (President of National WL), Gill Craig (Lymphoedema nurse), and Anita Stephen (Vice-President of Scottish WL)

greetings and promoting the League and its work.

Following the President we had our guest speaker, Gill Craig, who is a trained nurse working at Aberdeen Hospital in Lymphoedema support services. The League's annual Project this year is the Lymphoedema Support Network. She gave her talk using slides and it was both interesting and informative, giving all of us an insight into the difficulties and health issues of lymphoedema, a chronic limb-swelling problem that affects many post-cancer survivors but also can affect anyone whose lymph system is compromised for any reason, including genetic or as the result of an accident.

Although I have experience of this health condition, which can arise from breast surgery and other surgical procedures, I also learnt that children can be born with the condition that may not show up for years, typically when their body goes through the stress of puberty. The swelling in their limbs, especially their legs, makes it difficult for them to walk or find shoes and clothes to fit them.

The Lymphoedema Support Network, being the League Project this year, will not only receive funds raised by League members but will be part of awareness-training so more Unitarians become aware of this condition and how it affects people's lives.

By Barbara Clifford, president of Scottish Unitarian Women's League.